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The contribution of the Economic and Social Council to the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda as a principal body for policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development and for the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2012/263, the theme for the thematic discussion of the substantive session of 2013 is: "The contribution of ECOSOC to the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda as a principal body for policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development and for the follow-up to the MDGs."

2. The thematic debate will take place against the backdrop of a number of related processes in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, namely, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, consultations on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum and discussions on financing for sustainable development, as well as the various work streams of the United Nations system on the elaboration of the post-2015 development framework.

3. It is also unfolding at a time when the Council is itself engaged in efforts to redefine its role in order to better respond to increasingly complex global development challenges. Additionally, the determination of the international community to secure a better well-being for both present and future generations is at the centre of the issues to be addressed.

4. The thematic debate is expected to:

(a) Make a substantive contribution to the elaboration of the post-2015 development framework;

(b) Define the potential of the Council, building on its accumulated experience, to monitor and review the implementation of a post-2015 development framework, and to coordinate and oversee its subsidiary bodies;

(c) Discuss possible approaches to be taken by the Council in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development.

II. Shaping the post-2015 development framework

A. Millennium Development Goals and beyond

5. The Millennium Development Goals have been accepted since their introduction in 2000 as a clear set of goals, targets and indicators that could be monitored and around which policymakers could organize their fight against poverty and other development challenges. The goals have helped improve advocacy, policy implementation, monitoring and accountability. They have also offered governments the opportunity to better organize follow-up and implementation and to build capacity to achieve development objectives. Thus, the goals were instrumental in promoting action that was often comparable across countries and relatively easy to monitor at the global level. Monitoring and accountability at the global level has enhanced coordination and development cooperation and provided an important framework for reviewing global commitments.

6. Despite these successes, the goals were also perceived by some as silos that lacked systemic interlinkages, which rendered them inadequate to address more complex and other emerging development challenges. Moreover, the goals came to

be seen by some States as biased in favour of the specific concerns of particular groups of countries and unable to capture adequately the entire spectrum of the internationally agreed development goals.

7. In terms of review, monitoring and accountability, the framework was viewed as imprecise and based on selective targets. For example, a major criticism is the lack of specificity on targets related to goal 8 on global partnership for development. In cases where the targets and indicators were more precise, criticisms relate to their inflexibility, one-size-fits-all approach and inability to disaggregate by the level of development of countries.

8. Regarding their utility as a development framework, another often cited view is that the goals diverted attention from a more holistic approach to development. For example, goal 8 has focused more on financial resource gaps and aid flows, and less on institution-building and structural transformation, which are also key instruments for promoting development cooperation based on the principles of genuine partnership and sustainability.

9. There is unanimity that the goals have made a big impact in the lives of billions of people and should be the point of departure for a post-2015 development framework. Many also believe, however, that this can only be the case within a broader approach that captures the concept of sustainable development, has more universal applicability and forms a stronger basis for an overarching global partnership along the lines agreed at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

B. Outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the evolution of the sustainable development goals

10. The implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and work on the elaboration of the sustainable development goals confirm views that international goals, targets and indicators can galvanize political will and action towards a core set of development priorities. The goals have served as a rallying point for disparate actors to bring action to bear in combating poverty. Their simplicity and brevity contributed to their acceptability and success.

11. Achieving sustainable development, however, will require a far-reaching transformation of economies and societies, including fundamental changes in development strategies and in production and consumption patterns. An inclusive green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development can also contribute to this transformation.

12. The outcome document of the Conference renewed commitment to "sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations" (General Assembly resolution 66/288). These aims must be pursued within an integrated and coherent framework.

13. Thus, the framing of the sustainable development goals will necessarily build on and be broader than the Millennium Development Goals. The predominantly social dimensions approach of the Millennium Development Goals — the eradication of poverty and the promotion of health, education and gender equality and the empowerment of women — retain their importance and already feature

prominently in the list of priority issues mentioned by Member States in the initial input of the Secretary-General to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (A/67/634). However, alongside the imperative of bringing all humankind to a minimum threshold of well-being or development, the sustainable development goals must also integrate in a more balanced way the three dimensions of sustainable development.

14. There is growing understanding that a single, balanced and comprehensive set of goals should be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. As stated in the outcome document, the process of elaborating the sustainable development goals should be coordinated and coherent with the post-2015 development agenda process.

C. Contours of the post-2015 development framework

15. There are clear principles emerging in the preparations launched by the Secretary-General for the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. Many believe that the principles can be regarded as elements around which future discussions and outcomes will revolve, including:

(a) Building on the strengths of the Millennium Development Goals, while addressing their shortcomings;

(b) The core principles of sustainable development that will be distilled into the sustainable development goals;

(c) Better interlinkages among the objectives, providing a more holistic and universal approach to development and development cooperation;

(d) Flexibility in the setting of goals, targets and indicators so that countries can adapt them to their own specific situations;

(e) An improved system of review, monitoring and accountability;

(f) The need to reflect a global agreement that recognizes contemporary and future development challenges in all their complexity and to offer realistic, yet ambitious options for addressing them in a global partnership for development;

(g) The need to clearly define the means of implementation, based on the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities;

(h) The question of expanding the agenda to address other development challenges, including preventing conflict and promoting the rule of law.

16. The report of the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, "Realizing the Future We Want for All", states that business as usual cannot be an option for the post-2015 development agenda and transformative change is needed. Accordingly, that report recommends: a vision for the future that rests on the core values of human rights, equality and sustainability; an agenda format based on concrete end goals and targets; a high degree of policy coherence at the global, regional, national and sub-national levels; and an agenda conceived as truly global with shared responsibilities for all countries.

17. The Economic and Social Council can make a significant contribution to this historical dialogue and to the follow-up to and implementation of the post-2015

development agenda. The interrelated challenges of sustainable development and poverty eradication are at the heart of the Council's mandate. An issue-oriented Council can leverage the expertise and experience of the United Nations system to better analyse key development issues from a more holistic and cross-cutting perspective. The potential of a strengthened Council to enhance engagement with multiple stakeholders beyond the United Nations system and promote knowledge-sharing and joint programming for poverty eradication and sustainable development is a solid asset in this regard.

III. Identifying development priorities: contribution of the Council

18. Since the mid-1990s, the Council has promoted the integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits by advancing a holistic approach to economic, social and environmental issues that takes into account the interrelatedness of their different goals and targets. The Council has identified global development priorities initially through the themes selected by Member States to be addressed in the annual ministerial reviews, followed by a more specific identification of priorities within each theme at the national, regional and global levels, culminating in the ministerial declaration of the annual ministerial review. The reviews have assessed progress, identified gaps in implementation and recommended priority follow-up actions.

19. The cross-cutting and multidimensional scope of its themes allowed the Council to bring out the interlinkages between agreed goals and other related development concerns. As many of the issues addressed were not explicitly covered by an agreed goal, the Council played an important role in identifying and filling substantive analytical and policy gaps. This approach ensures that development is pursued in a holistic manner that reflects contemporary and emerging concerns, such as equity and sustainable development. The Council therefore has the potential to follow up on major commitments in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda.

20. Regional consultations of the Council represent the regional dimension of the reviews. The meetings are held in the lead-up to the high-level segment of the substantive sessions of the Council and involve all countries in a given region, focusing on the specific priorities for each region pertaining to the theme under review. The regional meetings have highlighted key regional challenges and provided policy options and recommendations to address development gaps, with their outcomes informing the Council's high-level policy discussions.

21. There have been challenges in integrating the regional dimension into the review. Improved synchronization of work programmes between the Council, the regional and functional commissions and specialized agencies of the United Nations will serve to better integrate the regional dimension into the review (the focus of the themes and work programmes of the regional meetings is defined by the particular priorities of each region). The "missing dimension" of regional cooperation with regard to the current Millennium Development Goals agenda could become a more prominent dimension of post-2015 development efforts, with the regional commissions and regional intergovernmental bodies assuming important roles.

22. At the national level, Member States volunteer for national voluntary presentations during the review. These presentations highlight individual country progress toward the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and are based on their respective experiences in the implementation of their national development strategies. More specifically, the presentations focus on the main successes and most urgent challenges and priorities faced by presenting countries with a view to generating solutions.

23. Since the first annual ministerial review, in 2007, the reviews have addressed six themes: eradicating poverty and hunger; sustainable development; global public health; gender equality and the empowerment of women; education; and productive capacity, employment and decent work. A seventh theme, addressing the role of science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, in promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, will be addressed by the Council in the review to be held in July 2013.

24. The ministerial declarations of the reviews, regional preparatory meetings and national voluntary presentations have highlighted and addressed several key themes and challenges in which the Council has made contributions. The number of presentations is particularly significant: by the end of the high-level segment of 2013 there will have been seven years of reviews, with 59 national voluntary presentations by 52 different countries, with over 300 different national policies presented and discussed. Approximately three quarters of the presentations thus far have been from developing countries and one quarter from developed countries.

25. There are several recurring priorities that have emerged from the global, regional and national levels of the reviews that could contribute towards the shaping of the post-2015 development agenda.

Poverty and sustainability

26. Poverty eradication will continue to be a key development priority for the United Nations and, together with sustainable development, will be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. The Council's discussions at the global level, such as during the review held in 2007, have emphasized the need for a multidimensional approach to poverty eradication that integrates considerations of economic growth, a sound policy environment at all levels, the rule of law and the importance of dealing with the systemic issues in globalization, trade, investment, finance and technology, among others.

27. Discussions at the regional level have focused on solutions to development concerns that have cross-border implications, as well as the importance of regional approaches, including South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation. At the national level, the focus has been on ensuring that poverty eradication and sustainable development are clearly captured in national development strategies and priorities. The presentations provided examples of strategies to address poverty, including Brazil's family grant programme (Bolsa Família) and its "Brazil without extreme poverty" plan (Brasil Sem Miséria) and Chile's social protection floor policies. Focus has also been given to ensuring that specific challenges, such as hunger and nutrition, food security, energy, water, education, gender inequality, and the interlinkages between them, are afforded due attention. The holistic approach advocated by the Council will be pivotal in the search for more effective ways of

addressing poverty and sustainability and in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Equality and inclusion

28. Equality and inclusion have been recurring themes in the reviews, particularly with respect to global public health; education, equality and the empowerment of women; education; and employment. These themes assumed particular importance and emphasis in 2010, when the ministerial declaration reaffirmed that gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to economic and social development. The declaration also recognized that implementation gaps persist and stressed the importance of implementing strategies in 19 different areas, including promoting and protecting women's equal access to adequate housing, property and land; facilitating access by women to affordable microfinance; and ensuring women's access to social protection. Similarly, equal access to opportunities for employment, education and training for the disabled, women, youth and other marginalized groups was stressed by the Council in 2012.

29. The African regional preparatory meeting in 2010 identified health as a major development priority relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women in Africa. Other regional meetings have also addressed equality and inclusion in the context of other review themes. With respect to the national level, the Republic of Moldova identified the need to increase the participation of women in political processes and of gender mainstreaming into social protection, health and education; the Netherlands stressed the necessity to foster gender balance in the private sector and universities; and the Republic of Korea highlighted the importance of the Act on Equal Employment and Support for Work-Family Reconciliation in addressing gender inequality in the workplace.

Employment

30. Employment has been a cross-cutting issue in the reviews in relation to poverty eradication, the empowerment of women, education and science, technology and innovation. The Council addressed the issue most directly, however, in the context of the 2012 review on productive capacity, employment and decent work. In particular, the 2012 ministerial declaration emphasized the need to place full employment and job creation as a central objective of macroeconomic policy objectives.

31. In 2012, the African regional meeting for the review highlighted the need to foster the development of small and medium enterprises in promoting job-rich growth. Latin America and the Caribbean proposed the creation of a regional high-level panel on youth employment; and the Asia and Pacific region identified challenges derived from inequality, job-poor growth and gender disparities in the labour market.

32. Examples at the national level introduced during the presentations included Kenya earmarking unemployment and underemployment as its most difficult and persistent problem; Ecuador prioritizing job security for the poorest and the extension of social security coverage to the underemployed and unemployed; and Algeria seeking to sustain its successes in economic and human development over the long-term through the diversification of sources of economic growth and job creation.

Education, health and food security and nutrition

33. Reducing education and health gaps is central to the Millennium Development Goals and will continue to be a priority in the post-2015 development agenda. The 2011 ministerial declaration recognized that education is essential for human development and sustainable development. At the regional level, Member States highlighted progress in the attainment of internationally agreed education goals and pointed out gaps. For example, both Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean highlighted the need to address education quality, while Asia and the Pacific highlighted the challenges derived from late entry into school, early dropout and gender inequality in education as critical development priorities.

34. At the national level, some Member States identified additional national educational priorities. For example, Bangladesh noted the need to address vulnerability in school participation, particularly of children from poor families, derived from macroeconomic volatility and uncertainty. Germany underscored its support to fostering education outcomes through capacity-building assistance programmes in Africa.

35. In the ministerial declaration of 2009, Member States recognized the interlinkages between health and poverty and that achieving the health-related goals is also central to sustainable development. The global discussion emphasized the linkages between health, poverty and sustainable development and also highlighted the social determinants of health outcomes. The regional reviews stressed the importance of addressing non-communicable diseases, developing strategies to confront the challenges presented by HIV, articulating financing strategies for health care and promoting health literacy. Additional national health-related priorities were highlighted by China, underscoring the importance of controlling infectious diseases, and by Sri Lanka, noting the need to improve housing, sanitation and water supply.

36. The Council has highlighted food security and nutrition as one of the most urgent challenges the world faces. As rising incomes and a growing population exert pressures for more and more nutritious food, climate change and natural disasters continue to threaten food production. The Council has underscored the need to mitigate food-related risks for the most vulnerable communities, including by improving land governance. Related problems, including child malnutrition, agricultural productivity, environmental sustainability, food waste, global food price volatility and regional access to food markets, have been also brought to the fore by the Council.

Urbanization and infrastructure

37. Urbanization and infrastructure are also themes that have been examined by the review. At the global level, Member States stressed the need to strengthen productive capacity in developing countries, including to address their infrastructure deficits. They reaffirmed that improved infrastructure is a determinant of sustained economic growth. In 2008, Western Asia identified the promotion of sustainable urbanization as a critical development priority. Policies proposed to foster sustainable urbanization included adopting a common green rating tool for urban developments and the strengthening of public-private partnerships for development. Effective urban transport and policies to facilitate telecommuting were addressed in the context of the intersessional meeting of the Commission on Science and

Technology for Development in 2013. These were regarded as a means to improve labour productivity and health indicators and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

38. Examples from the national voluntary presentations included: the Lao People's Democratic Republic identifying the importance of investing in infrastructure for reducing poverty and improving health and education outcomes; Algeria prioritizing the development of public infrastructure in its development strategies; Brazil identifying investment and infrastructure as one of their development priorities; and the United Republic of Tanzania highlighting the rising challenges of urban poverty.

Science, technology and innovation

39. Science, technology and innovation, as well as culture, are important drivers of social and economic transformation and critical to progress in the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. In the context of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in the post-2015 development agenda, science, technology and innovation will be crucial enablers for success and important means of empowering people. Promoting inclusive access to the benefits of science, technology and innovation, particularly information technology, will ensure that governments and all stakeholders have the means to deliver on their commitments towards poverty eradication and sustainable development.

40. The value of science, technology and innovation depends on the extent to which they are integrated into national development strategies and action plans for sustainable development, and is linked to economic, industrial and education policies, in particular. In the Arab region, key development priorities revolve around the role of education as the backbone to effective access to science and technology.

41. The African regional review in 2013 concluded that enhanced innovation throughout Africa would be the surest means of overcoming the technological, social, economic and environmental challenges associated with achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The transition to sustainable development will be highly dependent on the use of innovative technologies. Science, technology and innovation would also be an effective instrument for ensuring the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and should form an integral part of the post-2015 development framework.

Environmental sustainability

42. As a subsidiary organ of the Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development considered various approaches to natural resource use and management and their interlinkages with sustainable production and consumption, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. For its part, the review has called for individual and collective action by Governments and other stakeholders, to mitigate the impacts of the risks of environmental degradation and climate change on the global economy and to ensure that the interdependent goals of poverty eradication and sustainable development are met. Related concerns regarding the loss of biological diversity and the effects of drought and desertification were also highlighted as deserving critical attention. For example, during the national voluntary presentations, Belgium described its efforts in pursuing sustainable development; Finland identified as a priority the need to develop sustainable development indicators; and Kazakhstan underlined its ecological destabilization risks stemming from such factors as depletion of resources and desertification.

43. The Council has promoted agreement that ensuring the achievement of sustainable development in all countries requires the balanced integration of economic growth, social development and environmental protection by making such goals the central objective of national development strategies, supported by regional and global commitments on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities. The challenge ahead is to ensure that these dimensions are captured in the development goals under consideration, together with relevant indicators to monitor their implementation.

IV. Institutional framework for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development

A. Balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development

44. The outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development included recognition for the key role played by the Council in achieving the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. This mandate gave a new impetus to the work that the Council has undertaken regarding the integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Some work on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development was already being undertaken by national Governments and a number of partners, including in the United Nations system. However, such efforts fell short of the vision of Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development, and hence brought about the need to identify a more robust approach.

45. Member States are primarily responsible for the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference. The first stage in the integration process is to ensure that national Governments have the right tools to integrate sustainable development and poverty eradication in their development strategies and priorities. Programming and operational tools supporting national development efforts, including the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, are already in use in many developing countries and could be utilized as the first step in ensuring integration.

46. A key test to integration at the national level will be the extent to which national development strategies take into account international commitments on sustainable development. Well designed national, regional and global review processes offer a good system for mobilization, review, accountability and voluntary exchange of lessons learned and good practices in the implementation of commitments to sustainable development. As such, the national voluntary presentations are important implementation and policy review forums.

47. In General Assembly resolution 66/288, Member States underscored the importance of regional cooperation in integration. Many development challenges are of regional and transboundary scope and therefore cannot be addressed fully by countries acting alone.

48. Regional planning for sustainable development requires an integrated policy approach that involves the participation of all relevant regional stakeholders. The

regional preparatory meetings for the review present an opportunity for regional actors to gather and discuss regional development challenges. The participatory nature of the meetings provides a forum in which social, economic and environmental issues can be discussed and integrated into regional development approaches.

49. The regional commissions, United Nations entities working at the regional level and subregional entities play a critical intermediary role in bringing together national policymakers from the same region to compare development experiences. They can also advise on relevant policy and financing modalities to achieve progress at the national level towards the post-2015 development goals.

50. The Council and its subsidiary bodies, including the regional commissions, can further develop these regional approaches and thus strengthen the role of the regional commissions as institutional conduits between the global, regional and national levels. They can also help identify practical modalities for the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions into a robust post-2015 development agenda that takes into consideration the regional dimension. The regional implementation mechanisms established in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development could be merged with the regional meetings of the review to facilitate a review of prioritization and integration progress.

51. The international community is enjoined to implement sustainable development commitments in accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities. Thus, there will need to be continual communications and exchanges in the follow-up and implementation process between the national, regional and global levels, bound together by policy coordination and coherence, shared technical and expert knowledge and political commitment.

52. The mobilization of financial resources from all sources for financing development is critical to the success of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. The many financial and economic crises that have plagued the global economy have made it clear that such crises have serious repercussions for all economies, but particularly for developing countries highly dependent on official development assistance flows and other external resources. Development financing should, therefore, be included in the dialogue on poverty eradication, sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda.

53. In financing for development, concerted efforts are needed to strengthen the follow-up on the thematic areas of the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, including in the areas of domestic resource mobilization, foreign direct investment, international trade, finance and other innovative sources of funding. The contribution that the Council has made in this area, through the special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and through the high-level policy dialogue with the international financial and trade institutions at the high-level segment, could be strengthened considerably.

54. Clear institutional innovations are needed at all levels to ensure effective review and monitoring so that gaps and implementation challenges can be identified

and remedied on a continuous basis. It will also be necessary to put together a set of tools that offer practical guidance on how the actual work of integrating the three dimensions can be undertaken by all stakeholders while taking into account different national and regional realities. The institutional review that is required for effective response has already started in the General Assembly.

55. The follow-up to and implementation of the three dimensions of sustainable development form part of the mandates and work programmes of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, as well as of the funds and programmes, specialized agencies, and other entities of the United Nations development system. The current challenge is to reorganize and re-energize the United Nations system to be able to undertake this effectively.

56. A mapping of all the United Nations bodies and entities involved is required, so that gaps can be identified and redressed. A broad overview would include, as mentioned above, the high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD and the high-level policy dialogue with the international financial and trade institutions on current developments in the global economy. The work of the funds and programmes, the specialized agencies, and other United Nations entities in the economic area also needs to be strengthened. These should become central to the economic dimension of sustainable development.

57. In the social area, the work of the Commission on Social Development, the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, for example, provide a solid foundation on which to strengthen the social dimension. In the environmental area, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are good starting points for continuing to build the environmental dimension.

58. The General Assembly and the Council have already been tasked with undertaking specific functions in the follow-up to the outcomes of the Conference, although the institutional arrangement for this task, such as the high-level political forum, and a restructured Council, remains to be finalized. In addition, the United Nations system needs to mobilize technical support through the promotion of a science-policy interface to facilitate policy coherence in eradicating poverty and fostering sustainable development.

59. Other measures that are under consideration include better linkages to the General Assembly process on the follow-up to the mandates contained in resolution 66/288 and the establishment of the high-level political forum; staggered sessions of the Council throughout the year to sharpen its focus on issues and improve its scheduling with respect to related meetings, thus attracting high-level participation; and a clearer definition of the mechanisms for the discharge of the functions related to the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The needs of countries in special situations such as the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States will also need to be taken into consideration.

B. Monitoring and accountability

60. The Council also plays an important monitoring and accountability role in ensuring that commitments are honoured. Where implementation is lagging, new impetus is generated, thus providing a strong and necessary linkage between the technical and policymaking processes.

National voluntary presentations and voluntary mutual reviews

61. The national voluntary presentations have, in the past seven years, been important accountability tools in the follow-up to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. On that basis, the presentations could play an important role in the review of and follow-up to General Assembly resolution 66/288 and the post-2015 development agenda.

62. These positive contributions notwithstanding, there have been suggestions that the presentations should be improved further. For instance, there are continuing concerns that more efforts are needed to codify the lessons and the good practices gathered from the process. There is, in fact, no clear mechanism for follow-up on the outcomes of the presentations. In order also to encourage more Member States to volunteer, there may be the need to build in appropriate incentives for participation. There are suggestions that the participation of all Member States would make the reviews more credible.

63. Transforming the presentations into voluntary mutual reviews, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/67/736-E/2013/7) would address such gaps. While the reviews would remain voluntary, the mutual reviews would adopt a more rigorous approach, including developing a standardized analytical and reporting framework; developing follow-up and report back mechanisms; incorporating available national statistical data; and incorporating renewed participatory approaches into the process. In this regard, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is implementing a development account project that supports the participation of Member States in the presentations and incorporates mechanisms for reviewing and fostering the integration of the Council's policy recommendations into national development strategies.

64. A fully fledged global mutual accountability mechanism with universal membership and multi-stakeholder participation has yet to emerge. Global and regional initiatives can play a supportive role in promoting debate among development partners, as well as encouraging experience-sharing and capacity-building for programme countries and other stakeholders.

Development Cooperation Forum

65. The establishment, pursuant to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, of the biennial Development Cooperation Forum as a key new function of the Council marked an important step in strengthening mutual accountability. During its first five years, the Forum provided an effective and inclusive multi-stakeholder forum with considerable influence on global development cooperation and mutual accountability discussions. It has played a key role in fostering dialogue and knowledge-sharing both through its analytical work and by the holding of global and regional expert group meetings on mutual accountability.

66. Two broad-based surveys conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme in 105 countries in preparation for the sessions of the Forum held in 2010 and 2012 showed that much work remains to be done to strengthen national mutual accountability systems. Key pillars of national mutual accountability are rarely in place. To date, 26 countries had made some progress on national-level mutual accountability and 20 countries have initiatives under way to improve the quality of their mutual accountability. However, only three developing countries have aid policies with individual development partners with targets that are monitored regularly. Lack of political leadership and capacity constraints were also identified as major obstacles to stronger mutual accountability.

67. The report of the Secretary-General suggests that the Forum could further expand its role as a driver for greater national and global accountability in development cooperation by promoting mutual accountability as an overarching principle in the post-2015 development agenda, with a view to enhanced reporting on agreed commitments and adapting development cooperation to emerging challenges (see A/67/736, para. 26).

68. The post-2015 global development agenda should be supported by robust mutual accountability mechanisms at all levels. At the global level such a mechanism can serve as an important vehicle to disseminate the results and lessons learned of the global assessments of efforts to strengthen accountability systems at the national level to a wider audience. The emergence of new actors and informal networks has made it even more urgent to develop balanced and inclusive monitoring and accountability frameworks where development partners can work together on an equal footing. Parliaments, local governments, civil society, women's organizations, trade unions and the private sector should all have a strong role to play.

69. With its multi-stakeholder approach, the Forum is particularly well placed to undertake the tasks of an inclusive and balanced mutual accountability mechanism. The preparations for the Forum include country-led high-level symposiums that focus on key development issues aimed at fostering an open, informed and frank dialogue among development actors and developing ideas for future action. The Forum can also serve as an opportunity to systematically distil the lessons learned from other assessments at the global, regional and country levels.

C. Coordination and coherence

70. The subsidiary bodies of the Council, including the functional and regional commissions and expert bodies, constitute the technical and knowledge repositories of the Council's wider system and have been mandated to carry out specific tasks related to the follow-up to and implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In many cases their mandates are more holistic and broader than addressing specific development goals. In the ongoing discussions on the United Nations system response to the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the elaboration of a post-2015 development agenda, there is a clear recognition of the importance of these intergovernmental and expert bodies and of the technical support that they provide to the Council in their respective areas of competence.

Their technical and knowledge assets would be also critical in supporting the Council in its response to crises and emergencies.

71. The subsidiary bodies of the Council should be leveraged in new ways to respond to new challenges and issues in poverty eradication and sustainable development. Examples of this in recent years include the Council's work with the Commission on the Status of Women, on the empowerment of women; with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, on science, technology and innovation; and with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, on the impact of illicit drug activities on development. The engagements contribute to the development of important norms and standards and provide critical policy guidance in response to the analysis of new trends and their impact on development.

72. The Council has also received valuable advice in preparation for its annual sessions from the Committee for Development Policy and the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The regional commissions have supported the mandates of the Council principally by focusing on the regional dimensions of development challenges. However, they have also participated in national workshops held in preparation for national voluntary presentations, engaged in the substantive and logistical planning of regional consultations and provided inputs to the reports of the Secretary-General for the annual ministerial review and the thematic debate.

73. The ongoing discussions on the review of General Assembly resolution 61/16 have re-emphasized the role of the subsidiary machinery of the Council. The new mandates that have been assigned to the Council require fashioning its technical and expert responses to generate ideas and policies that will overcome the constraints encountered in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. There is a long tradition of coordinating and integrating different aspects of development concerns that must be reinvigorated and focus to a greater degree on key development priorities.

74. In order to improve coherence, the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies should be guided by a unified vision and agenda with clearer reporting lines. Selecting a main theme each year for the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies would increase coherence, while the Council should also engage in more substantive dialogue on the reports and recommendations of the subsidiary bodies, including the functional commissions, for a better two-way engagement. The periodic meetings between the bureau of the Council and its subsidiary bodies also need to be strengthened and utilized to ensure that work programmes are complementary and mutually supportive.

75. There should also be a review of the coordination and guidance offered through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process for the operational activities of the United Nations system, with the aim of improving operational, normative and programmatic linkages, as well as linkages at the national, regional and global levels.

76. There will also be a need for a careful review to determine whether the secretariat of the Council has adequate resources to support the enhanced coordination and coherence functions mentioned above.

D. Emergencies and humanitarian crises

77. Addressing issues of special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance will remain a high priority for the international community.

78. The complexity of issues and the imperative to act promptly and with as much information as necessary have always demanded coordinated and coherent responses. Resilience-building activities, such as disaster risk reduction, early warning and risk monitoring, disaster preparedness and early recovery, contribute to safeguarding development gains by mitigating the human and economic losses caused by natural and man-made disasters.

79. While many countries have made significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, according to the World Bank's *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, no low-income country in a state of fragility and affected by conflict has achieved a single Millennium Development Goal. Projections indicate that by 2030, the vast majority of the world's poorest will live in countries affected by chronic violence and political instability, with a heavy concentration in Africa. In this regard, closer coherence and coordination between humanitarian and development actors is very important. This approach is increasingly critical, as the failure to reduce and manage the risk of crises can often compromise all efforts toward the achievement of poverty eradication and sustainable development goals.

80. The discussions on the transition from relief to development in the Council enable interfacing and collaboration between the humanitarian and development communities. In 2012, for instance, the humanitarian segment discussed the requirement and importance of building resilience in the Sahel, highlighting the need to address the root causes of crises and strengthen resilience in tandem with the immediate humanitarian response. It also proposed ways to better coordinate development and humanitarian action. The discussion reflected the increasing focus among humanitarian actors on proactively managing and reducing disaster risks as an effective and cost-efficient alternative to traditional natural disasters responses. There has also been focus a on the need to promote the sharing of data for more effective evidence-based decisions.

81. The capacity of both the Council and the United Nations system at large to respond quickly to global emergencies and humanitarian crises can be improved. The Council needs to be able to convene the support of all the relevant parts of the United Nations system quickly, bringing to those emergencies and humanitarian crises all the analytical and other resources necessary to make quick decisions and act effectively. It is equally important to build in risk assessment and the capacity to anticipate crises so that development gains in the aftermath of crises can be consolidated and strengthened.

V. Engaging partners

82. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), the international community resolved to give greater opportunities and develop strong partnerships with external actors to contribute to the realization of the Organization's goals and programmes. This commitment to partnership has since been repeated at every major summit of the United Nations.

83. The implementation of all the mandates and goals set by the United Nations can best be achieved by leveraging catalytic partnerships with non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and academic and scientific institutions. Partnership is a key enabler for meeting global challenges and leading the initiation of transformation. These can have a catalytic impact on the full range of United Nations activities from poverty eradication and the promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development, to peace and security, humanitarian action and human rights.

84. To this end, the Secretary-General launched a partnerships initiative in 2012 that will be implemented through a proposed United Nations Partnerships Facility. The core task of the mechanism will be to capture the potential of partnerships to support the delivery to scale of the full spectrum of United Nations mandates, goals and values.

85. In its resolution 66/223, entitled "Towards global partnerships", the General Assembly underscored two aspects of partnerships involving the United Nations system that require nurturing. The first relates to voluntary relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve common objectives, such as those defined by the internationally agreed development goals. The second relates to continuing efforts to find innovative and additional ways to achieve lasting impact by identifying and replicating successful partnership models and pursuing new forms of collaboration with both public and non-public actors. These can include regional and subregional organizations of both developing and developed countries that have come together around given issues in the context of South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation.

86. Partnerships with the private sector, philanthropic foundations, civil society and non-governmental organizations have increasingly become an integral part of the work of many United Nations organizations. These partnerships have not only complemented the efforts of the United Nations system to achieve its objectives but also contribute to its renewal by introducing new methods of work. While these partnerships cannot substitute for governmental responsibilities and commitments, they are instrumental in the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals.

87. The partnership engagements undertaken to date have supported ongoing work related to preparations for the annual ministerial reviews on the basis of themes agreed by Member States. This can be strengthened further by examining in detail how partnerships can be structured around clear thematic areas and contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

88. The Council has demonstrated its ability to bring stakeholders together and nurture ideas for partnerships. The Partnerships Forum and youth forum are good examples of the potential of partnerships. The discussions that were undertaken in 2013 on science, technology and innovations and on philanthropy underscored the need to enrich the intergovernmental dialogue with new ideas from all stakeholders. It is now necessary to come up with ways to ensure that the wealth of ideas, knowledge and solutions discussed are used effectively to enrich programmes and development outcomes.

89. The Council is uniquely positioned to provide opportunities for systematic, strategic and in-depth discussion of joint initiatives between Member States, the United Nations system and their non-governmental partners. This will be critical given the clear understanding that the work on the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda can only succeed with the active and effective involvement of all stakeholders.

VI. Conclusions

90. **The major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Summit, were extremely useful in focusing the attention of the international community around key development challenges. The role of the Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits needs to be strengthened.**

91. **In this regard, the post-2015 development agenda should be based on more holistic, sustainable pathways. There is value in elaborating one coherent global post-2015 development agenda, with sustainable development at its core and one set of goals encompassing all its interconnected dimensions, based on the fundamental principles of human rights, equality and sustainability. Accountability, mutual responsibilities and a clear understanding of different capabilities in responding to this new framework will be essential to its successful implementation.**

92. **The Council has made substantive contributions to the review of the implementation of the outcomes of the major international conferences and summits and has identified a number of development priorities. Through this work many recurrent development themes have been addressed and examined in detail, including in the areas of: eradicating poverty and hunger; sustainable development; inequality and exclusion; gender equality and the empowerment of women; decent work and employment; education; health, food security and nutrition; infrastructure and urbanization; science, technology and innovation; and environmental sustainability. The wealth of ideas, knowledge and lessons learned, as well as the solutions recommended in the discussions, should be built upon in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.**

93. **The role of the Council and its subsidiary bodies in the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and in the coordinated and integrated follow-up to the outcomes of major international conferences and summits will be crucial in facilitating sustainable development policy coherence and coordination. The proposals that are currently being discussed in the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 should aim for a more coordinated and coherent issues-based work programme that will further enhance the Council's effectiveness and contributions to advancing development.**

94. **The annual ministerial review has performed important functions in reviewing and monitoring progress in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, at the national, regional and global levels. The Development Cooperation Forum has played an equally important role in promoting global dialogue and**

partnerships on development cooperation, as well as in reviewing and monitoring global development commitments. The parameters of effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels are just emerging. Undoubtedly, the functions that the Council has undertaken since 2005 enjoy solid support and have much potential for the implementation of the mandates of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and of the post-2015 development agenda.

95. **The Council's work with its subsidiary machinery has demonstrated its potential as a key platform for promoting coordination and coherence and for leveraging the full technical and knowledge assets of the United Nations system, including in response to rapidly emerging and new development challenges. This coordination and coherence potential should be further developed and fully utilized in executing the new mandates of the Council as well as in the implementation of and the follow-up to the post-2015 development framework.**

96. **The Council has an important role in engaging a wide range of development actors. The partnership engagements entered into to date have supported ongoing efforts of the Council in all areas on the basis of themes and priorities agreed by Member States. This engagement can be further strengthened by examining in detail how partnerships can be structured around clear thematic areas and thus contribute more systematically to the post-2015 development framework, including the sustainable development goals. The work of the Partnerships Forum and youth forum has clearly demonstrated the potential contribution of multiple partners to new and innovative development thinking and solutions.**